

# ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TURKEY



## *Bulletin No.7*

*August 1971*

*Foreign Section Editor:*

R. F. Porter

*Editorial Address:*

The Lodge, Sandy,  
Bedfordshire, England

Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

by Tansu Gurpinar.

### EDITORIAL

Firstly, we wish to apologise for the 1968/69 Report not having yet appeared. This is due to the fact that we have been unable to obtain an electric typewriter with a Turkish keyboard; the matter has now been rectified and the report will be appearing shortly. We have already collected all the material for the 1970 Report and this will be published shortly after that for 68/69.

### Three new birds for Turkey

An examination of the British Trust for Ornithology's ringing records has revealed the first record of Gannet (*Sula bassana*) for Turkey. This was of a bird that was ringed as a chick on the Bass Rock (a large breeding ground of the species off the East coast of Scotland), on 4th July 1964. It was recovered the following year on approximately 5th March 1965, at the Gulf of Iskenderun.

The second record is of a species that is showing signs of pushing northwards as a breeding species into Europe. This is the Little Swift (*Apus affinus*). Between 8 - 10 were found by the Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Expedition on 2nd July 1970 at a small town near the Gulf of Iskenderun. For security reasons the exact locality is being withheld.

During their journey to Iran in April 1970 a team of British ornithologists observed 8 Great Northern Divers (*Gavia immer*) on the Black Sea coast near Espiye.

Note: These records are subject to acceptance by the Records and Editorial Committee.

### AUTUMN MEETING

An informal meeting of the Foreign Section will be held at Bowmaker House, 55-56 St. James' Street, London S.W.1. (nearest tube stations Green Park or Piccadilly) on Thursday, 21st October, 1971.

The meeting will commence at 1900 hours and there will be short illustrated talks by Alan Vittery on the Central Plateau, Michael Helps on North-East Turkey and Richard Porter on the Menderes Delta. Plenty of time will be allowed for informal discussions and all members and their friends are welcome.

Burdur Golu by F.J. Koning (Holland)

Lying at the western-most end of the Southern Coastlands Taurus Mountains, Lake Burdur is one of the most fascinating lakes in Turkey. This is not only for its fine stretches of shoreline, agreeable climate and dramatic scenery, but for the unique composition of its wildfowl populations in winter.

Coming from the town of Dinar a rather low pass has to be negotiated and from here it is a fine sight to look upon the lake deep in the valley below. Even with a strong telescope the water seems without life and the light of the sun reflected on the surface seems to be the only attraction. The lake lies 840m. above sea level and measures some 34 km by 8km at its widest; so to the birdwatcher in winter there are many census headaches. It is just possible to travel round the whole perimeter but the track along the northern border, which is the finest of all, can only be tackled if the winter rain-fall is light and the ruts have not been deepened too much by ox-drawn carts and tractors.

The concentrations of wildfowl are usually found in the eastern and western corners of the lake where the water is at its shallowest. Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) and Teal (*Anas crecca*) can always be seen in hundreds. About 1,500 White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) winter, spending most of their time grazing in the neighbouring meadows. Especially in the eastern half of the lake the waters abound with the very rare White-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*). The Turkish winter population of this charming little "stiff-tail" has reached a maximum of just over 6,000 and although smaller numbers are present on other lakes, particularly the two satellites Yarisli and Bayindir, Burdur accounts for the main population, and in the winter of 1971 counts there totalled over 5,000 birds. In Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, the bird is very rare and the nearest concentrations are found in Pakistan where 700 to 1,000 birds regularly overwinter.

The short wings of this duck, compared to the size of its plump body seem to make it reluctant to fly once it has settled in its winter quarters. Although the largest concentration of White-headed ducks are seen in the eastern part of the lake, a good telescope is needed to cope with counting. West of the town of Burdur the road wanders very close to the lake's edge and here affords a much better opportunity to observe the intimacies of the birds daily life.

In the middle of March a few thousand "stiff-tails" are still present. At this time of the year the lake is probably at its most attractive with almond trees blossoming in profusion, their pink blooms contrasting strongly with the blues of the sky and the water. The fields are now starting to be ploughed and each morning lorry loads of women and children arrive from nearby villages to spend long hours planting vegetables and hoeing weeds. A speciality of the villages along the northern border is the cultivation of roses for perfume.

The White-headed duck is not the only attraction for ornithologists. Grebes, especially the sprightly black-necked grebe can be seen in vast concentrations. (In November 1970 we estimated a total of 8,000 and earlier that year nearly 10,000 were counted.) Often the small grebes swim in flocks of several hundreds. Suddenly, as if all triggered by the same impulse, half the birds have dived, whilst a nearby group of 60 or 70 birds are suddenly grown into a dense flock of 600. They are far more active than the lazy "stiff-tail".

In the poplar and almond trees of the lake's environs the Syrian Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos syriacus*) can frequently be seen, and in the fields flocks of seed-eating passerines are very common. Mixed flocks of Red-fronted Serins (*Serinus pusillus*) and Linnets (*Carduelis cannabina*), Goldfinches (*Carduelis card.*) and Greenfinches (*Chloris chloris*) are typical of the stubbles. Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*) are also common. The warm winter sun creates a very mild climate on the slopes and in the Junipers along the northern border many insectivorous passerines overwinter: Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*),



Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) and Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). For those people who like the more impressive raptors, the Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*) is always present, and as for nocturnes the Little Owl is numerous while from suitable rock formations his Goliath-like relative the Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) will occasionally be heard.

It can be seen then from these few paragraphs that Burdur is at once rich in its bird life and impressive in its setting; if one has the good fortune to visit Turkey in winter, this jewel amongst lakes should not be ignored.

(F.J. KONING, who has recently joined the Records and Editorial Committee will, in future, be in charge of the co-ordination of winter wildfowl in Turkey. His address is :-

Bulkmerweg 35, Burgervlotbrug N.H., Holland.



BURDUR GOLU, the winter haunt of up to 6,000 White-headed Ducks and 10,000 Black-necked Grebes - F.J. KONING.

#### SUBMISSION OF RECORDS FOR THE BIRD REPORT

These should be sent to the Recorder (R.F. Porter, O.S.T., The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., England) as soon as possible after the end of each year but in any case not later than 31st March. Records should be listed under species (not please under localities) and using only one side of a sheet (this enables records to be cut and pasted onto the record sheets). Species should be listed in the order used in the Check List (i.e. that used by C. Vaurie in "Birds of the Palearctic Fauna").

Example layout:-

GAVIA ACTICA (Black-throated Diver) - F.J.K. (observer's initials)

|                  |             |    |                            |
|------------------|-------------|----|----------------------------|
| Western Anatolia | 17 Jan 1971 | 20 | Calti Golu<br>(Nr. Acigol) |
|------------------|-------------|----|----------------------------|

|                     |             |     |             |                                                                |
|---------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Southern Coastlands | 21 Feb 1971 | 150 | Goksu Delta | In small flocks just offshore,<br>2 birds were slightly oiled. |
|---------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|

The Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) - a new breeding bird for Turkey  
by Klaus Warneke (Germany)

According to Kumerloeve (Vogelwelt 83:177-181) very few observations of Flamingos have been recorded before the last decade. It is only in the last few years, when ornithologists have begun visiting Turkey in increasing numbers, that the Flamingo has been found in nearly all parts of the country except Thrace, the Black Sea coastland and South Eastern Turkey. Whether or not this species has always occurred with the same frequency is, and probably always will be, a matter of some conjecture. Certainly there is no indication of a climatic or habitat change to support the suggestion that the species has only colonised the country in the last 10 years.

Today Flamingos can be found on the Southern coastlands, on the Silifke Lagoons and the mouth of the river Ceyhan (Akyatan and Akyayan). Nowadays breeding at this locality is out of the question since the birds are strongly persecuted by hunters. In South Western Anatolia, on the Menderes Delta, as many as 6,000 birds have been recorded in winter. (BIRD REPORT 1966/67; Vogelwelt 83:177 and personal communication with O.S.T. Recorder.)

Inland the Flamingo can be found on several of the salt water depressions of the undrained Eregli-Hotamis-Hortu Steppe, an area in which they were frequently recorded by Professor C. Kosswig between 1940 and 1950. Breeding must be considered possible in this area though rarely flocks of more than 60 are recorded.

During the winter most of the waters of the Anatolian Plateau drain onto Tuz Golu; which means this lake can increase its water surface up to 2550 sqkm. The border zones with water of low salinity attract countless wintering or migrating birds; on 31st March 1969 we counted, besides thousands of waders (e.g. 5,000 Ruffs, 1,150 Avocets) and many ducks (e.g. 1,500 Shelduck, 600 Teal), 3,700 Flamingos, many in prenuptial plumage, at the south-eastern corner of the lake. A cold wind, coming from the West, drove the birds to a sheltered bay where courtship started among small groups followed by several pairs copulating. All this gave the impression that the birds were not far from their breeding area. The day before we had already seen over 1,500 on a nearby part of the lake and late in May over 14,000 were recorded (R.F. Porter pers. comm.).

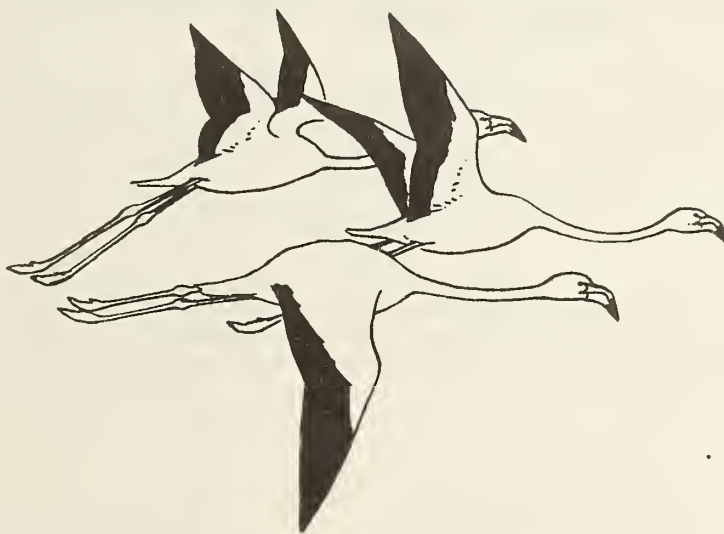
In summer, the lake shrinks to form small remnants with salt concentration as high as 320% (considerably higher than in the Dead Sea). Salt crystallises in huge quantities forming thick crusts and this high salinity makes the lake almost sterile and consequently unattractive for birds. In 1970 we only found here as breeding birds: 5,000 Flamingos, 2 pairs of Shelduck, 2 pairs of Ruddy Shelduck, 150 pairs of Herring Gull, and 20 pairs of Jackdaw. Besides in 1969 LEHMANN has recorded 15 pairs of Caspian Tern (The Oologists' Record 43:37).

The search for Flamingo breeding colonies can be very lengthy, their position depending so much on the height of the water level. At the end of the winter 1969, abundant precipitations created a relatively high water level. In 1970 we therefore found the probable breeding place of the year before completely deserted, the nest mounds already being partly overgrown by Salicornia. On the neighbouring isles we detected a jackal den and the nest of an eagle built on the ground, both not occupied in 1970. Within the radius of several kilometers we found the shells of hundreds of last year's Flamingo eggs on the isles. In 1969 LEHMANN too found egg-shells of this type, but he could not discover the colony. We only found the 1970 colony after exhaustive searching on foot (for instance, more than 50 km was covered over the salt crusts of the lake on 18th May). It was located in the middle of a deep water zone on an emerged sheet of salt, at a distance of at least 4km from the shore. It consisted of three blocks subdivided into 3, 2 and 8 smaller colonies, all of these arranged in a line on the "back" of the emerged crust of salt. On the area which had emerged first there were nearly exclusively nests with young birds up to 10 days old; the other nesting sites had been occupied in the course of the progressing emergence of the salt sheet towards North, so that the northernmost colony consisted only of nests with new-laid eggs or still empty ones. After a cautious count a total of at least 5,000 nests was recorded, 70% of these with eggs, 20% with young and 10% still empty. Breeding started at the beginning of April. The nest mounds, 20-35cm. high, had been built predominantly of piled up salt, excrements and soil. (Soil had to be procured from the lake shore.) There were dead



young birds and a number of ejected eggs among the nesting mounds; apparently new eggs were laid at once after losses, as nearly all nests contained one egg.

In 1970 we discovered another breeding place in Turkey on a lake, rich in bird life, the location of which shall be withheld to ensure its protection. Hundreds of ducks, waders, gulls and a great number of cranes are breeding in the extended reed-beds and on the muddy zones bordering this "Bird-Lake". A more detailed study of this area shall be undertaken in 1971. From a distance we were able to spot a colony of at least 1,500 pairs of Flamingo in the midst of the lake. An arising storm and depth of water prevented any further approach. The most astonishing fact about this breeding place is that the water had only a very faint taste of salt; it was totally turbid by suspended substances, presenting no feeding problems.



#### Editorial Notes

Flamingos - Ian Willis

1. Dr. Klaus Warncke, 806 Dachau von Ruckteschellweg 5, W. Germany, is currently preparing a paper on the distribution and status of the Flamingo in Turkey for publication in a future Bird Report.
2. The second colony mentioned by Dr. Klaus has now been put "under guard" by the Turkish National Parks Department to prevent disturbance to the nesting Flamingos. We congratulate them on this splendid move (see photo sent by NIHAT TURAN)
3. It is of interest to note that immature Flamingos have been recorded in autumn at Tuz Golu since at least 1966 and in September 1968 20 juvs. were seen at the S.E. corner of the lake; 35 juvs. and 1,800 adults were seen at Kulu Golu which lies to the N.E. of Tuz Golu. Also in the autumn of 1968 over 2,000 adults were recorded at Acigol (in S.W. Anatolia) and on 10th September at least 10 young birds (almost certainly birds of the year) were seen there. It is quite possible that this too could be a breeding locality for this species.

4. Flamingos nest on Lake Rezaieh in Western Iran and the young of these were marked with blue plastic collars in 1970. The following letter from the Game and Fish Department requests information on the subsequent sighting of these birds. Clearly such information would also be of extreme interest to students of Turkish Ornithology.

Game & Fish Department,  
P.O. Box 1430,  
Tehran/Iran.

28th November 1970

Dear Sir,

In August 1970, personnel of the Iran Game and Fish Department conducted a survey of the Greater Flamingo, Phoenicopterus ruber, and the White Pelican, Pelecanus onocrotalus, in Lake Rezaieh Protected Region, Iran, 37 30' N, 45 30' E.

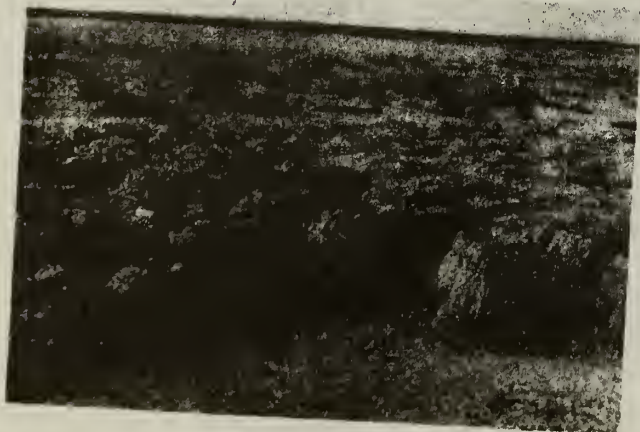
Conservative estimates place these breeding colonies at 40,000 and 2,800 birds, respectively. 283 mature Flamingos and 150 juvenile Pelicans were leg-ringed. In addition, 2,280 juvenile Flamingos were neck-banded with flexible blue-plastic collars, 1/2-inch wide. These collars bear no identification markings, but collars used in the future will display the identification of this department.

In order to resolve the controversy surrounding dispersal of this Flamingo colony, and to provide for proper management of the species, this department would greatly appreciate your assistance in disseminating this information to interested personnel, and in reporting any records of the marked birds in your area.

Please direct any correspondence to: Division of Research and Development, this department.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Sincerely yours, Eskandar Firouz,  
Director.



Flamingo nests at a Turkish colony.

Photo: Nihat Turan

The Dead Sea Sparrow : Further breeding places in Iran and Turkey by Stanley Cramp (England)

From Ibis, 113 (1971): 244-245 - published by kind permission of the Editor and Academic Press.

Kumerloeve (1965, 'Alauda' 33 : 257-264) gave a detailed account of the discovery of six known breeding areas of the Dead Sea Sparrow (*Passer moabiticus*), including the first nesting in Turkey at Birecik, while in 1969 ('Ibis' 111 : 617-618) he recorded a further colony on the river Chabour at Ceylanpinar on the borders of Turkey and Syria, with nests in both countries, and quoted the discovery by Vielliard of a colony some 100 km north-west near Maras. In April 1969 P.J. Condor and I found two small colonies, about 15 km apart, in tamarisk thickets by the Marun river in southern Iran. Owing to floods we were unable to survey these thoroughly but they were apparently small, neither exceeding about 20 nests. This new site is some 130 km west of the Karun river where the third nesting area of the species was reported in 1904. Suitable stands of tamarisks are found for some miles at intervals along both sides of the Marun river here and it seems likely that other colonies are present. On 5 May 1970 P.A.D. Hollom, R.F. Porter and myself found a colony of at least five pairs of Dead Sea Sparrows some 7 km from the Euphrates at Birecik, in an olive grove interspersed with vines, just off the main road to the west. They were nesting in olive trees at a height of some 4 m. This habitat is very different from those previously reported which have been in trees, usually tamarisks or willows, close to rivers. There were no rivers close by and we saw no open water of any kind in the area, although it seems likely that some was not far distant since Desert Finches (*Rhodopechys obsoleta*) were also breeding there.

R.F. Porter has kindly informed me that the Ornithological Society of Turkey has received reports of two further colonies in Turkey in 1970 from B. Palm, C.A. Blume, K. Frost-Larsen et al. The first was on the west side of the Euphrates at Birecik (previous colonies were on the eastern bank), with some 30 nests (and 50 singing males) built in willows and eucalyptus at heights from 5 to 10 m, and the second was on an island in the river Ceyhan, 2 km south of the Adana highway, with 10 to 15 pairs, again nesting in willows and eucalyptus at heights from 5 to 10 m. (This latter colony was first discovered by B. Palm in 1968, when there were also 10 to 15 pairs.) This site is some 200 km west of Birecik but breeding may occur still further west, for G. Bundy on 27 April 1970 recorded two singing males in the Goksu delta on the Mediterranean coast.

Kumerloeve (1969) suggested that the species might be extending its range. It has certainly extended northwards along the Jordan valley from the original area around the shores of the Dead Sea, and Marchant (1963, 'Ibis' 105 : 516-557) noted that the concentration near Baghdad was far higher than in 1919. Moreover, P.A.D. Hollom, who visited the colony in the thickets by the bridge over the river Jordan between Jericho and Salt in April and May 1955 and April 1963, informs me that the density of the population there had grown greatly during the eight-year period and he estimated the increase in numbers as approaching the order of ten times. However, some places, such as the Marun river in Iran, have been rarely visited by ornithologists. The species would clearly repay further attention in Turkey and nearby countries, especially in view of the evidence of breeding away from the immediate vicinity of rivers.

(We have recently learnt that Graham Bundy recorded a male Dead Sea Sparrow on the Goksu Delta on 8th April 1971).

The Dead Sea Sparrow is similar in size to the House Sparrow (*P. domesticus*). The head is a soft grey colour with black bib and whitish superciliary stripe and moustachial stripe, the latter terminating in a yellow patch (this is extremely difficult to see). The upperparts are brownish with buff edgings and dark grey streaks and bright chestnut wing coverts, giving an appearance not unlike a summer plumage Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius lapponicus*). The underparts are largely off-white. Ed.)



Conservation Exhibition in Istanbul.

A keen supporter of the Society is Mr. Salih Acar, the well-known Turkish bird painter. Earlier this year, he and his wife, Belkis, staged an exhibition at the Istanbul Headquarters of the Yapi ve Kredi Bankasi on the beauty of birds, the wonder of their migrations and the need for their conservation. This was visited by over 30,000 people and received much favourable comment in the Turkish Press.

One of Salih Acar's activities over the last few years has been ringing birds in and around Istanbul and the Sea of Marmara. He has organised the manufacture of his own rings which are highly professional and bear the inscription JOURNAL HURRIET, Istanbul, Turkey. A Spoonbill that he ringed at Lake Manyas in the spring of 1969 was shot at Kom Ombo, in Egypt in November of the same year.

Panels from Salih Acar's  
exhibition in which featured  
a number of his paintings.

